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Housekeeper's Chat

Monday, November 24, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Pumpkin and Other Kinds of Pie". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Home Baking", and "Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes."

--ooOoo--

There's a reason for almost everything, isn't there? Golden pumpkins ripen in abundance as the first frosts of late October touch them, and all through November, pumpkins are plentiful. Our American Thanksgiving dinner was built around the central dish of wild turkey, flanked with good, old-fashioned country foods. Apples- for cider- were stored in every cellar; fall vegetables; and so what could be more natural than to use the pumpkins, right at hand, popular with everybody, for dessert?

Remember that poem I quoted the other day? I'll remind you of another verse, just to prove that fifty or seventy-five years ago, whenever that poem was written, people expected pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving dinner:

"Over the river and through the woods,
Now Grandmother's cap I spy,
Hurrah for the fun! Is the pudding done?
Hurrah for the pumpkin pie!"

In a minute I'm going to broadcast the recipe for Pumpkin Pie that is in the Radio Cookbook. If you have one of those little green books, you needn't listen. If you are as well acquainted with the Radio Cookbook as I am, you know that it contains recipes for Apple Pie, Butterscotch Cream Pie, Chocolate Pie, Cream Pie, Custard Pie, Green Tomato Pie, Lemon Pie -- that's all I can remember, but I think there are four or five others included. But before I can tell you how to make pumpkin or any other pie, may I talk a little about making pie crust.

Do you know why most inexperienced cooks have trouble, when making pie crust? Because they do not get the right proportions of fat, flour, and water, or else they work the dough too long and strenuously, and make

their pie crust tough. Any well-flavored fat can be used, but the flakiest crust can be made with lard, or any one of the many good cooking fats or oils now on the market.

Perhaps you would like to have a recipe, for a plain pie crust, enough for a two-crust pie, or for two open-face pies. There are four ingredients, in a plain pie crust. Write them down, if you like.

1-1/2 cups sifted, soft-wheat flour.
About 2-1/2 tablespoons water, or just enough to
make a stiff dough.
5 to 6 tablespoons fat, and
1 teaspoon salt.

Better check them, to be sure you have the correct amounts: (Repeat ingredients).

First, sift the flour and the salt together. Then, combine the fat and the flour. Some cooks cut the fat into the flour with two knives, or a pastry fork, or a biscuit cutter, so that the ingredients will not be warmed, by too much handling. However, the best cook I know employs the old-fashioned method of mixing the fat and flour with the tips of her fingers, working very quickly.

When the fat and flour are combined, sprinkle the water over the surface, and work it in with a light motion until evenly mixed. Shape the dough into a ball, either in a bowl, or on a lightly floured board. Divide the dough so that there will be a little over half, for the lower crust. Roll the pastry lightly into a sheet, test the size by inverting the pie tin over it, and allow an additional inch all around beyond the rim. Line the pan with the dough, and see that there are no air pockets between the pan and the dough. Put in the pie filling, and roll out the upper crust. Cut slits to allow the steam to escape. Moisten the rim of the undercrust with water, place the top crust in position, and press the two edges together with thumb and finger, or with the tines of a fork. Trim off the edges of dough, holding the knife underneath the pie tin at an angle, so that the dough will not be cut too close to the edge of the pan. If there is a fruit filling, press the edges together again to prevent the juice from leaking out while the pie is baking.

For pumpkin or other open-face pies with only one crust, it is best to bake the crust a delicate brown before the filling is put in. This gives a crisp undercrust. Line the pan as already described, and prick the pastry well over the bottom and sides of the pan before baking. Bake the crust in a hot oven (about 450° F.), just long enough to turn it a delicate brown. Then pour in the pumpkin filling, and finish the baking in a moderate oven.

Pumpkin pie, and its cousin squash pie, has milk and eggs in it, and needs to be baked at moderate heat, like a custard pie. As soon as the pumpkin filling is set, the pie is done. If you bake it too much, or too quickly, the filling is likely to be watery, like an overbaked custard. Now, are you ready to write down the ingredients for the pumpkin filling?

PUMPKIN OR SQUASH PIE

1-1/2 cups pumpkin, or squash, cooked until thick.
1 cup milk
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon mace
2 eggs, and
1 tablespoon butter

Check the nine ingredients while I repeat them: (Repeat)

Put all the ingredients, except the eggs and the butter, in the double boiler. Bring to the scalding point. Beat the eggs well; add them to the hot mixture. Stir until it starts to thicken. Add the butter. Pour this mixture into a delicately brown pastry shell. And, as I said, bake the pie in a moderately hot oven until the filling sets.

I suppose some of you will want to make your pumpkin pie a little extra festive, because it's Thanksgiving Day. Well, then, - why not spread it with fluffy mounds of whipped cream? Sweeten the cream slightly, of course, and add a few drops of vanilla to it. And if that isn't festive enough, I've still another suggestion: Put a spoonful of quince jelly on top of the whipped cream as you serve each person. Another way to make the dessert course seem a little out of the ordinary is to bake individual pie shells in your muffin tins, fill them with pumpkin filling, bake, and then add the whipped cream and jelly to each one at serving time.

Somebody asks, "What shall I do if I can't get whipping cream?" That's easily answered. Make a meringue of two egg whites. You can use the yolks in the pie, or make salad dressing with them.

Tomorrow I'll give you the entire Thanksgiving menu.

Tuesday: The Thanksgiving Menu.
